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Farm Bureau Rural Road Safety brochure offers tips for farmers & motorists

For many Oregon farmers, summer is the busiest time of year. By July, harvest of major crops like grass seed and wheat is in full swing, and it's not unusual for a farmer to spend 14-hour days on a tractor out in the field.

Sometimes farms have acreage spread over a wide region, and farmers must drive large, slow-moving swathers, combines, or trucks down a stretch of rural road to reach a field. Driving a large piece of equipment on a highway is legal and often a necessary part of harvest; but it can pose a safety risk for both farmers and motorists without caution, courtesy, and patience.

Just in time for the 2016 harvest season, the Oregon Farm Bureau Health & Safety Committee presents its Rural Road Safety brochure, offering important information for staying safe when encountering large farm equipment on the highway.

"The goal of the brochure is to save lives," said Anne Rigor of the Oregon Farm Bureau Health & Safety Committee. "It's heartbreaking to hear about injuries or deaths involving farm equipment that could've been avoided if drivers had simply slowed down."

If a piece of large farm equipment must use a road, it is required to have a reflective, triangular, orange-and-red, slow-moving-vehicle sign displayed on its rear. This equipment is designed to travel at speeds of only 15 mph or 25 mph, and this symbol is a warning for the driver following it to slow down immediately.

"If you're driving 55 miles per hour on a highway and come upon a tractor that's moving at only 25 miles per hour, it takes only 8 seconds to close a gap the length of a football field between you and the tractor," said Rigor.

The brochure offers useful tips for the general public about how to share the road safely with farm equipment, the meaning of the triangular slow-moving-vehicle sign, and how the SMV sign is for use on slow-moving vehicles only.

"Many people don't realize that it's illegal to use a triangular slow-moving-vehicle sign as a driveway marker or a reflector on a stationary object," said Rigor.

Other tips for motorists include:

- If you decide to pass farm equipment on the road, please do so with caution.
- Be watchful of vehicles behind you that may also try to pass.
- If you must enter the oncoming lane of traffic, do not proceed unless you can see clearly ahead of both you and the vehicle you will pass.
- If there are any curves or hills ahead that may block your view or the view of oncoming vehicles, do not pass.
- Do not pass if you are in a designated “No Passing Zone” or within 100 feet of any intersection, railroad grade crossing, bridge, elevation structure, or tunnel.
- Do not assume that a farm vehicle that pulls to the right side of the road is going to turn right or is letting you pass. Due to the size of some farm implements, the farmer must make wide left-hand turns. If you are unsure, check the operator’s hand signals and look at the left side of the road for gates, driveways,

“The brochure also includes information for farmers. For example, there are some good strategies about how to make their equipment more visible on the highway,” said Rigor.

The OFB Rural Road Safety brochure can be downloaded at www.oregonfb.org, or request as many free copies as you’d like from Anne Marie Moss, annemarie@oregonfb.org, 503.399.1701.

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* Note to Editors: “Farm Bureau” is a registered trademark; please capitalize in all cases.

The state’s largest general farm organization, Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) is a grassroots, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization representing the interests of the state’s farmers and ranchers in the public and policymaking arenas. First established in Oregon in 1919, Farm Bureau is organized in all 36 counties and has 7,000 member families that are professionally engaged in agriculture.

Oregon Farm Bureau President Barry Bushue is a third-generation farmer raising a variety of vegetables and berries at a nearly century-old farm near Boring, Oregon. He is OFB’s 15th president.